

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 22 1975

DATE ENTERED JAN 31 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Bowers Mansion

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Nineteen miles south of Reno, Nevada

CITY, TOWN ~~off~~ on U.S. Highway 395

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Washoe City

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Nevada

STATE

Nevada

CODE

32

COUNTY

Washoe

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

County of Washoe, Parks and Recreation Department

STREET & NUMBER

1205 Mill Street

CITY, TOWN

Reno,

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nevada

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.Washoe County Assessor's Office,
Washoe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

101 South Virginia Street

CITY, TOWN

Reno

STATE

Nevada

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Nevada Historic Sites

DATE

1968

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDSCenter for Western North-American Studies
Desert Research Institute, University of Nev.

CITY, TOWN

Reno

STATE

Nevada

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bowers Mansion is one of the few remaining U-shaped structures in Nevada which represents a mixture of various architectural styles. The Georgian influence is evident with the structure surrounded on three sides by its veranda and topped with a cupola; while the Italianate embellishment is evident by the flat roof, bracketed projecting eaves, turned balusters for railings, and the quoin stones. Natural granite was quarried from the hills behind the mansion and sandstone was shipped from San Francisco to be used as the main constructional materials. The masonry for the front section of the mansion was so perfect, no mortar was used. Other extravagant touches to the structure included a mechanical doorbell system, water pipes to the bedrooms, and a wine cellar.

After the death of her husband and child, Eilley Bowers enlarged the mansion to accommodate boarders. Her haphazard remodeling included the removal of the roof joists of the wings of the mansion in order to enlarge the ceiling for headroom. The poorly built mansard-type roof with roundhead dormer windows was added and created a third story of rooms. A stairway to serve the third floor was incorporated alongside the minor passage which was at right angles to the main hall.

During the period after Eilley Bowers lost the mansion and the time it was acquired by Henry Ritter in 1903, it fell into a state of extreme disrepair. Furniture, dishes, statuary, tile and other items were stolen, the third floor balcony fell off, windows were broken and animals wandered at leisure through the structure. During this period it was owned successively by the following individuals: Myron C. Lake, Bill Thompson, Theodore Winters, General Clarke, Samuel P. Davis and Philip Mighels.

Ritter purchased it for the sum of \$1,000 and restored it for use as a resort. He operated a bar and restaurant there and the outside facilities served as a picnic grounds. There was also a swimming pool on the grounds. The Virginia & Truckee Railroad made regular excursion runs to the resort and a wooden walkway once extended from the railroad platform to the grounds. No alterations were made by Ritter, but a large icebox was constructed outside the kitchen door.

In 1946, Ritter decided to retire and he had many offers to purchase the mansion and the grounds. He wanted it to be taken over by the state of Nevada for recreational use, but the arrangements could not be made. The Reno Women's Civic League took on the mansion as a project and raised funds through subscription to hold it off the market until the Washoe County Commissioners arranged its purchase. In the fall of 1966, Washoe County voters approved a bond issue to finance its restoration and improve the grounds. A new swimming pool was put in to the north and an extensive grassy picnic area and playground laid out.

The restoration of Bowers Mansion by Edward Parsons AIA began in 1967. He replaced the roof by calculating from the existing number of stones above the windowhead to the base of the entablature. Also, he installed

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES August 1863 - present BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown/Unknown "San Francisco Architect"

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bowers Mansion is of state historical significance because it is the finest example of the type of home constructed in Nevada by the new millionaires of the Comstock Lode. Its builders, Lemuel S. "Sandy" Bowers and his wife, Eilley, were two of the first to become wealthy from their mining interests in Nevada, and the mansion was the fulfillment of Eilley's dreams of prestige and respectability.

The mansion was built upon a piece of property some 56 acres in size, located north of Franktown in Washoe Valley. The land had originally belonged to Eilley and a previous husband, Alex Cowan, who purchased it in 1856, and farmed there for about a year before he returned to Utah with other Mormon settlers in the area. Eilley secured a divorce and moved to Gold Canyon where she ran a boarding house and later acquired the mining claim which, together with that belonging to Sandy, became the source of their fortune.

A San Francisco architect designed the structure and stonecutters were brought in from Eilley's native Scotland. No expense was spared in either the construction or the furnishings, and the cost of the structure exceeded \$400,000. Eilley and Sandy toured Europe in 1861-63, purchasing furniture, statuary, paintings and other such adornments.

The architectural significance is exemplified in the pre-Victorian architectural style that combined Georgian and Italianate embellishments found between 1860 and 1870.

Following completion of the mansion, Eilley and Sandy entertained local residents in a most lavish fashion, but their mine soon began to play out. An early spring thaw in 1868, flooded and destroyed their mill in Gold Hill and their fortunes began to decline. Stock fell from \$400 a share to \$8 and Sandy died in April of 1868. Eilley took some bad financial advice in trying to pay off their creditors and put herself in an even worse financial situation. There was some effort made to sell the mansion to the state for an insane asylum, and Eilley operated it as a resort for a time. Much of the furnishings were raffled off eventually, and a third story added to take in boarders.

Myron C. Lake foreclosed on a mortgage and the mansion went through a succession of owners over the next quarter century. For a time it lay

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alice B. Addenbrooke, The Mistress of the Mansion, Palo Alto, Calif. Pacific Books, 1950.

Myron Angel (ed.) History of Nevada with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches . . . , Oakland, California: Thompson & West, 1881
(Reproduction by Howell-North Books, Berkeley, California, 1957), pp. 39, 571, 622-24

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.48 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 11 255000 4352000
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Claudia C. Mazzetti, Public Service Intern

ORGANIZATION

Nevada State Park System

DATE

October 15, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

201 South Fall Street

702-885-4370

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Carson City,

Nevada

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE *

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Alternate State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

Dec 16-1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

1/31/96

ATTEST

DATE

1.29.76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 22 1975

DATE ENTERED

JAN 31 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

7 Description

a bond beam in order to stop the buckling of the roof. For the exterior of the structure, he used reinforcing wire and applied stucco, which was marked off into squares. The chimney was rebuilt with new brick, a new applied panel door replaced the destroyed original door and the restoration of the cupola. Also the front porch was rebuilt and the exterior was repainted. The restoration of the interior of the structure included on the first floor; the kitchen, dining room, two parlors, living room, bedroom, vestibule, store room and library. On the second floor, six bedrooms, billiard room and two halls. Parsons noted that the original construction crew and/or the Bowers did not follow the architectural plans. For example, on the first floor in the process of removing the plaster, the crew discovered a blocked-up window. Parsons also removed Ritter's icebox in order to get to the kitchen door. The mechanical doorbell system was relocated and noted by Parsons. There were no replacements of the windows during the final restoration. The Washoe County Park and Recreation Department installed wine racks (but, no wine) to the wine cellar.

Sixteen of the mansion's rooms are open to the public. Period furniture has been donated by some 500 Nevada families, and there is some original furniture in five of the rooms. Tours are conducted under the auspices of the Washoe County Parks and Recreation Department, which also maintains the mansion and the grounds.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 22 1975
DATE ENTERED	JAN 31 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

8 Significance

abandoned until Henry Ritter acquired it and ran it as a resort until 1946. Washoe County later purchased it as a public recreation and historical site, and it presently serves as a county park with swimming, picnicking, and playground facilities. The mansion has undergone complete restoration, and public tours are conducted during the summer and fall of each year.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 28 1975

DATE ENTERED JAN 31 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

9 Major Bibliographical References

Willie A. Chalfant, "Bowers Mansion," Desert Magazine, Vol. V (August, 1942), p. 16.

Swift Paine, Eilley Orrum, Queen of the Comstock, Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929.

Bowers Family File, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, Nevada.